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Mom Buy Me That!

"Children's Advertising and You"
An Indispensible Parents' Guide

CANADIANA
DEC - 2 1988

Alberta
CONSUMER AND
CORPORATE AFFAIRS

DON
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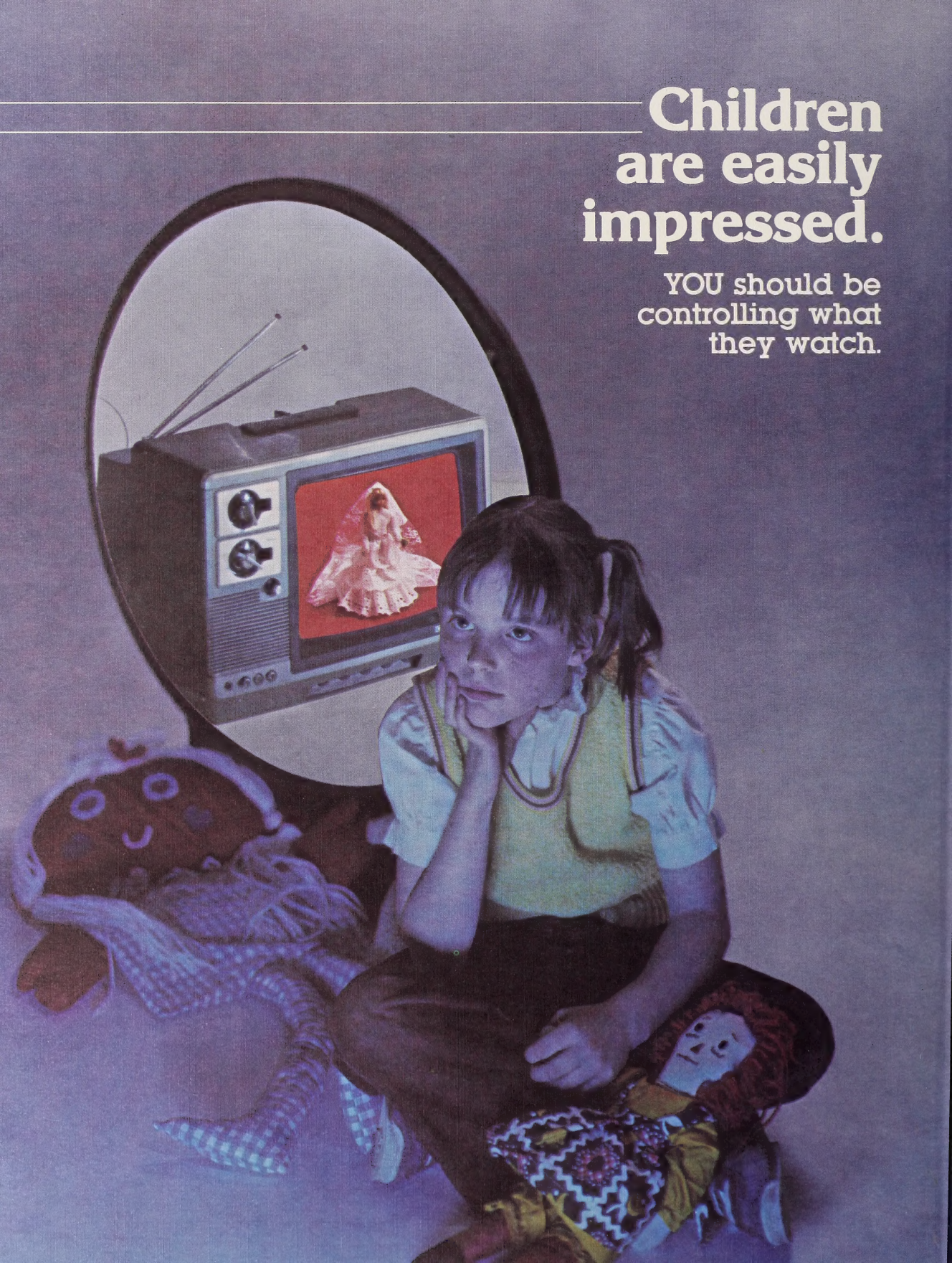
Children are easily impressed.

YOU should be controlling what they watch.



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JUST PLAYING AROUND
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Alberta Consumer and Corporate Affairs fosters orderly and responsible activities in the marketplace by keeping consumers informed and by promoting fair competition among businesses.
November, 1986

KIDS'-AD QUIZ

Kids'—Ad Quiz. A provocative and unique diversion for adults only. Hand crafted in the cellars of a dedicated quiz master for people with discriminating tastes. Kids'—Ad Quiz. With almost 30 per cent more than another leading quiz. Clever you! You probably already know the answers to many of the questions. But, some answers might surprise you. Some might even astound you! All will help you think about advertising, and about the important role you play in helping your children learn all about it. Kids'—Ad Quiz. Impress your friends. Increase your appeal. Kids'—Ad Quiz. For generations, steeped in the natural ingredient, bio-ad-wise. There's virtually no other quiz like it. Do it! You're worth it!

Just read the questions and put a check mark beside your answers. The correct answers are provided on page 7.

1 About how many hours per week does the typical Alberta child watch TV?
- ☐ 10 hours
- ☐ 20 hours
- ☐ 30 hours

2 How many TV commercials is a child likely to see in one year?
- ☐ 500
- ☐ 5,000
- ☐ 20,000

3 Which products account for the majority of advertising to children? (Check two items.)
- ☐ toys
- ☐ sports equipment
- ☐ milk products
- ☐ highly-sugared foods

4 At about what age do most children understand that the purpose of TV commercials is to sell?
- ☐ 4
- ☐ 8
- ☐ 12

5 At about what age do most children see through the techniques that television advertisers use to sell their products?
- ☐ 6 - 8
- ☐ 8 - 10
- ☐ 10 - 12

6 Why are there so many cartoons shown on Saturday morning TV?
- ☐ they are the most suitable type of program for children
- ☐ they result in the biggest profit for the broadcasters
- ☐ children would rather watch cartoons on Saturday than at any other time

7 Are children affected by advertising which is directed to adults?
- ☐ yes
- ☐ no

8 Which Canadian TV network runs children's programs without commercials?
- ☐ CTV
- ☐ CBC
- ☐ NBC

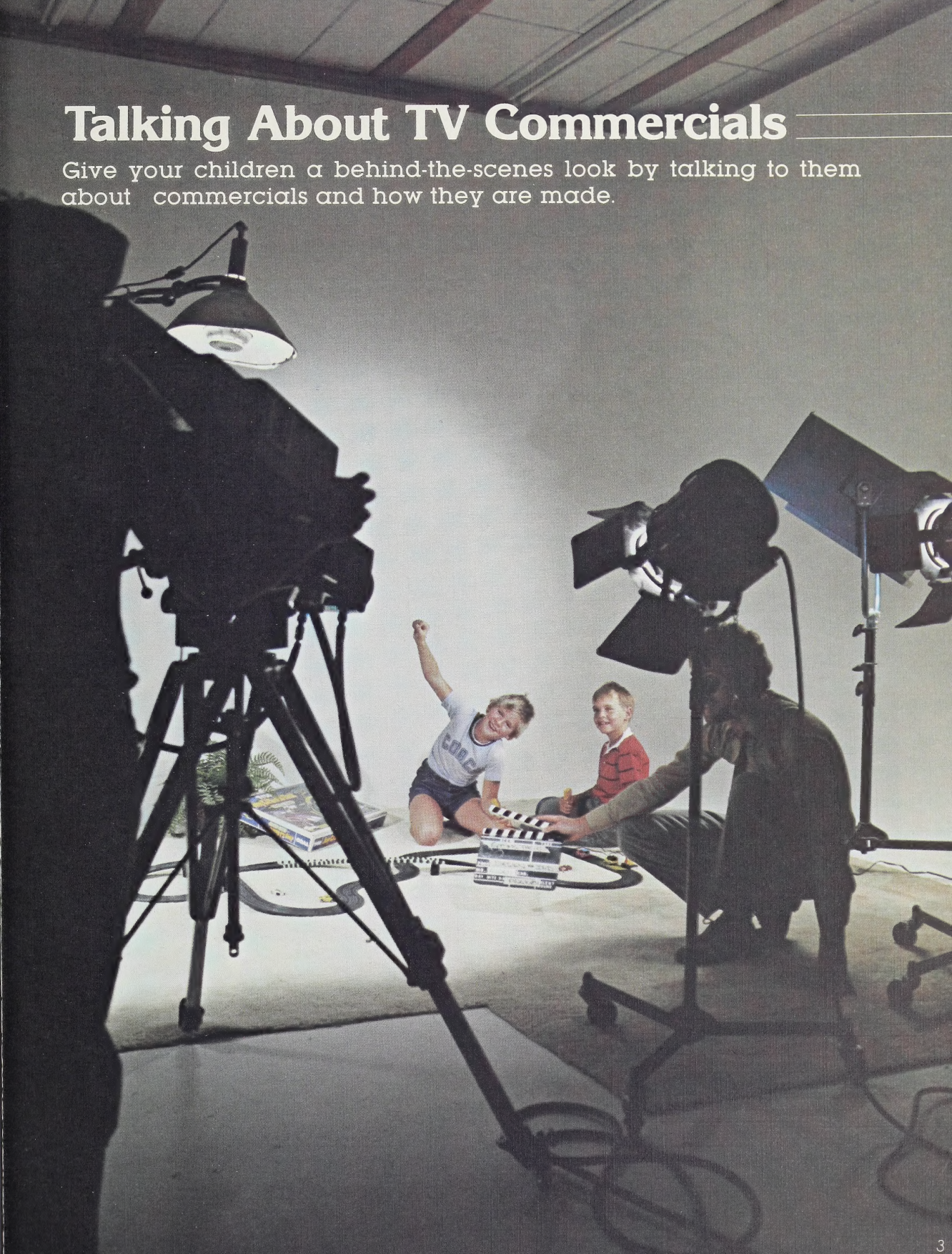
9 Which of these methods do advertisers use to reach children? (Check more than one.)
- ☐ comic book ads
- ☐ specially designed packaging
- ☐ offers on packages
- ☐ word-of-mouth

10 Can parents help their children learn about advertising?
- ☐ yes
- ☐ no

Now turn to page 7 and see how you did.

Talking About TV Commercials

Give your children a behind-the-scenes look by talking to them about commercials and how they are made.



Children ask for products they see advertised. In their parents' view, these products are often too expensive, poor quality, non-nutritious or potentially hazardous. The children soon discover that these products are not all they are cracked up to be in the commercials.

As you talk to your children about TV commercials, they will learn to see through common sales techniques. Ultimately, they will become less influenced by advertising hype and more able to make wise consumer decisions.

Start by brushing up on children's TV advertising techniques. For instant consciousness-raising, spend a Saturday morning in front of the TV set. You will also enjoy reading "Mr. T. Ricky Vishon Meets the Kool-Kat Kid" in the pull-out section of this booklet.

Match your discussions to each child's level of understanding. The display boxes below and on page 5 offer suggestions of what to discuss with children of various ages. You know your children well, but exploring these questions may give you a few new ideas about their understanding.

If your children are simply too young to understand even the basic concepts in the first box, leave the subject and come back to it in a few months. In the meantime, you might consider keeping the number of commercials they see to a minimum. This is a good idea because children who cannot understand basic concepts are very susceptible to commercial messages. Read "Touch That Dial" on page 6 for guidelines.

Keep your discussions short and simple. Don't bore. Don't baffle.

Repeat...repeat...repeat. Is a TV commercial ever shown just once? Repetition works. Is a TV commercial ever shown just once?

Talk about commercials which are aimed at adults too. Such commercials can have subtle effects on children. For example, they will probably not want to buy the floor wax they see advertised, but they might learn that it is a woman's solemn duty to be pathologically obsessed with the shine on her floor. Just be sure to match your discussions to each child's level of understanding.

Talk about the programs themselves too. They also advertise; materialistic life-styles, sex, violence.

Think out loud. When you see a product or a commercial that you do not approve of, say so. Tell your children why you feel that way. Similarly, when you approve of a product or commercial, explain why. Encourage your children to do the same.

Because older children often resent being "preached" at, thinking out loud is a particularly good way to get your point across. Address your comments to another person in the room, or to no one in particular. You can also think out loud by asking rhetorical or leading questions. In this way you are not speaking to your children directly, but you are still exposing them to your values and helping them understand advertising techniques.

TV commercials are obviously a powerful influence in our lives. If not counterbalanced by other influences, they can play a major role in the kind of consumers our children are, and will become. Your guidance can help your children. Start talking...

TALKING TO THE UNDER 8 SET

These questions will help you start discussions about TV commercials with young children.

- Tell me when the next commercial comes on.
- What is a commercial?
- What is your favorite commercial?
- Who puts commercials on television?
- Why are there commercials on television?
- What are they trying to sell in the commercial that is on right now?
- What products are advertised on children's shows? Why do they try to sell _____ to you?
- What products are advertised on Mommy's and Daddy's shows? Why do they try to sell _____ to us?
- Did you ever ask me to buy you something you saw on TV? What was it? Was it as good as it looked on TV?
- What are commercials made of?
  I can hear _____ (voices, music, laughter, etc.)
  I can see _____ (children, candy bars, toys, cartoon characters, etc.)

As well as talking to you about TV commercials, young children will enjoy these activities. Suggest that each time they see a commercial, they jump up and turn around, clap their hands, do a jig, or any other action. They might also enjoy mimicking what is taking place on the screen. Such games will help them learn to identify TV commercials, and become active rather than passive television viewers.

TALKING TO 8 - 12 YEAR OLDS

Audio-visual Techniques

Point out the techniques listed below. Encourage your children to tell you when they see or hear them. Talk about whether or not the product is as good as the commercial makes it look. When they can identify all the techniques, you might all like to play "TV Commercial Bingo." See the fold-out flap at the back of this booklet.

- background music and jingles
- cartoon characters
- sound effects
- slogans
- exotic or special background scenery
- special lighting effects
- special camera angles and close-up shots
- fast cuts (many different shots edited together in fast sequence)

An excellent way to learn about audio-visual techniques is to concentrate on one technique at a time. Turn the sound off completely when a commercial is shown. Ask your children what they see. What sounds do they think are present? What product is being sold? This is not always obvious, especially in commercials directed to adults. Another time, suggest that they close their eyes. Ask them what sounds they hear. What pictures do they think are accompanying the sounds? What product is being sold?

Psychological Appeals

Want to sell a truck? Put a ruggedly-handsome wrangler, wearing skin-tight jeans and a cowboy hat, behind the wheel. Want to sell candy-coated cereal to children? Make eating that cereal look like more fun than a birthday party.

We all have desires. Adults want status and sexual attractiveness. Children want fun, friendship and excitement. There is nothing wrong with these desires. There is something wrong with believing that buying products will automatically satisfy them. Help your children recognize and evaluate the underlying psychological appeals in TV commercials.

The Real Meaning of Words

Children often literally believe that a chocolate bar is "the best," or a toy race car is "the fastest." Help them see through such claims.

Be sure they understand disclaimer phrases such as "some assembly required," "batteries not included," and "all sold separately."

Evasive words can leave a positive impression even though they do not mean much. For example, what do these words really mean:

- <u>helps</u> prevent...
- <u>part of</u> a nutritious breakfast...
- chocolate <u>flavored</u> ice cream...

He-men and Little Women

The roles played by characters in commercials can help create stereotyped beliefs. For example, a young girl might be influenced to believe that only toys such as dolls and nurse kits are appropriate for girls, and that being a wife and mother is the only appropriate role for female adults.

Talk to your children about the male and female roles portrayed in commercials. This will expose them to your values and show them the broad range of roles they can play now and in adulthood.

Premium Offers

The next time you see a commercial with a premium offer, ask your children what the commercial is trying to sell. Children often cannot tell what is being advertised: the plastic toy or the breakfast cereal. You might also talk about why the manufacturer includes premiums with certain products, and whether or not these premiums are FREE...FREE...FREE...

Information Content

Evidently, many advertisers have decided that straight information about price, nutritional value, durability, size and materials or ingredients used does not sell products. Such information is rarely mentioned in commercials.

Point out to your children, commercials which are full of flashy techniques but devoid of solid information. Talk to them about why straight information is important. Ask them why they think straight information is not included in many commercials. Ask them where they could find this type of information if they were thinking of buying a certain product. See "Finding Facts the Ads Don't Reveal" on page 12 for ideas.

Touch That Dial!

By influencing your children's choice of TV programs, you can reduce the amount and control the type of advertising they see.

Television is not completely good or bad. How it affects your family depends on how you use it. Talking with your children about TV programs and encouraging them to view TV selectively are the two best ways of ensuring that TV has a positive influence on them.

Selective viewing is actively choosing TV programs, rather than passively watching whatever happens to be on. Hand-in-hand with this goes limiting the time spent watching TV programs.

You can and should influence your children's TV viewing habits; just as you influence the type of food they eat and the time they go to bed. Which programs should your children watch? The best way to answer this question is to watch television programs yourself and then make your own judgements.

Do you approve of the number of commercials shown? Some stations show fewer commercials than others, some stations show no commercials at all. Programs on these channels are good choices if you want to reduce the amount of advertising your children see. The display box below has more information.

Do you approve of the products advertised and the advertising techniques used? The seemingly endless stream of advertisements for gooey candy bars and expensive toys may not be your idea of suitable TV fare.

What do you think of the programs themselves? Do they promote materialistic lifestyles? You know the type; big houses, flashy cars, designer fashions. Do they offer unsuitable role models; the school teacher who doubles as the class comedian, the adulterous wife who conducts a different affair each week? Are the programs too violent? Is the subject matter too mature for your children to understand?

Once you have completed your survey, make a list of programs that are suitable for your children, and decide how many hours of television they may watch each week. Encourage your children to make their own choices from the list that you provide.

You may also wish to make a list of programs that they may not watch. Stick to it. By refusing to let them watch programs and commercials that you do not approve of you demonstrate that certain values are important to you.

If your children are still young, it will be relatively easy to introduce the idea of selective viewing. If your children are older and already addicted to TV, it will be more difficult to wean them away from the screen. Talk to them about why you want them to view TV selectively. Make the changes gradually. Most important of all, help them find other things to do. If they get bored, they will soon be back in front of the set.

No matter what age your children are, they will learn by your good example. Get into the habit of limiting your viewing and carefully choosing the programs you watch. Turn the set off. If it is left on "just for background noise", the watching habit will be harder to break.

Make the most of watching TV together, by discussing the things you see. "Talking About TV Commercials" offers a variety of ideas.

This article is the tip of the iceberg of information about children and television. Much has been written about television violence, for example. This is particularly so since the realization that some of the most violent programs on television are the Saturday morning cartoon shows. Television sex is another major concern. Learn more about these problems and how to overcome them by asking your local librarian for books and articles on the subject. You may also obtain information from the Children's Broadcast Institute and Action For Children's Television. The addresses of these two organizations are listed in the article "Speak Out". In many places across the province, courses and workshops on children and television are offered by organizations such as parent/teacher associations, church groups and adult education centers. Ask about such programs in your locality.

MAXIMUM MINUTES OF NON-PROGRAM MATERIAL

CBC
- No advertising on children's programs
- 11 mins. (on the average) on all others

Other Canadian Stations
- 8 mins. on children's programs
- 12½ mins. on all other programs aired after 6 p.m.
- between 6 a.m. - 6 p.m. an additional 2 mins. per hour can be used to promote programs with Canadian content

U.S. Public Broadcasting System
- No advertising

Other U.S. Network Affiliated Stations
- 9½ mins. on children's programs aired during Saturday and Sunday daytime hours
- 12 mins. on children's programs aired Monday to Friday between 4 p.m. - 6 p.m.
- 9½ mins. during prime time
- 16 mins. on all other programs

KIDS'-AD QUIZ 'ANSWERS'

1. **The typical Alberta child watches approximately 20 hours of television per week.**
   That may not seem like much, but consider this: before a child reaches his twelth birthday, he will have watched TV for 10,192 hours —or, almost one year and two months.

2. **A child is likely to see 20,000 TV commercials each year.**
   At that rate he will see 200,000 commercials between his second and twelth birthdays. He will devote over two months of his waking hours to watching these messages.

3. **Toys and highly-sugared foods account for the majority of advertising to children.**
   Half the toy commercials shown each year, appear in the advertising blitz which is conducted in November and December. The rest of the year, advertisements for foods such as sugar-coated cereals, candy bars and soft drinks predominate.

4. **Most children understand that the purpose of TV commercials is to sell something when they are approximately 8 years old.**
   Children who are younger than this, tend to explain the difference between commercials and programs in superficial terms. They might say, for example, that commercials are shorter or funnier than programs. This suggests that they do not understand selling intent. They are therefore more likely to think that commercials are completely truthful, and to want the products being advertised. The good news is that, with their parents' help, these young children can develop an understanding of selling intent sooner than if they are left to figure it out themselves. That's what this booklet is all about.

5. **Most children cannot see through television advertising techniques until they are approximately 10 to 12 years old.**
   Children are often cynical about TV commercials, but their cynicism does not help them cope with advertising. For example, children over 8 years old, usually suspect that advertisers try to make things look better than they really are, but they cannot tell exactly when or how this is being done. They may ask for an item "just in case it is as good as it looks." They are often disappointed! Without guidance, children do not usually develop the ability to fully understand and evaluate TV commercials until they are 10 to 12 years old. You can help your children understand sooner. This booklet shows you how.

6. **Cartoons are shown on Saturday mornings because they result in the biggest profit for the broadcasters.**
   Saturday morning is prime time for children's programming not because of children's wishes but because, at that time, children are the only market which can be attracted to the TV screen and sold to the advertisers. Chase-and-bop cartoons monopolize the Saturday morning schedule not because they are the best programs for children, but because they appeal to the entire 2 - 12 year old market. Big audiences mean that the broadcaster can charge more for commercial time. Some programs are merely bait to catch young consumers.

7. **Yes, children are affected by advertising which is directed to adults.**
   Children rarely want to buy the adult products they see advertised. However, they do absorb subtle messages about values and consumer behaviors from these advertisements.

8. **The CBC runs children's programs without commercials.**
   See "Touch That Dial" for more interesting facts about the scheduling of commercials.

9. **Advertisers use all these methods.**
   The majority of children's advertising is found on television, but children can be reached in other ways too. For example, count the number of advertising pages in a typical comic book. It might surprise you. Now, think of the colorful cereal boxes lining grocery store shelves. Such packaging attracts children's attention and influences them to ask for the products. Other packages, such as chocolate bar and candy wrappers, offer all kinds of mail order items. Even if children do not personally come in contact with advertising, they learn about products from their friends.

10. **Yes, parents can help their children learn about advertising.**
    This booklet offers a wide variety of suggestions for achieving this goal. Not all of them are practical for all families. It is up to you to choose the ones which will work best in your situation. You **can** make a difference. Good luck!

Just Playing Around

Learning to be a good consumer can be fun. Here's how.

As parents know, children would rather play than eat or sleep, and according to those who study the development of children, playing is what children should be doing. In play children explore situations of all sorts. Parents can incorporate topics in the children's play that they wish their children to examine.

Here are some suggestions on how to include consumer and, particularly, advertising topics into children's play.

Designing Packages

Imagine this. It's summer vacation. The children are just finishing their corn flakes and campfire toast at the picnic table. The morning is still cool. You tell them to clear away the dishes and clean the table, but leave the cereal boxes where they are. You will be back in a minute.

This is the time to pull out the bag of felt pens, pencil crayons, poster paint, scissors and manila paper. Now have the children design, color, and paint a cereal box of their own. Tell them to make the box look so good that they would want to buy it if they saw it in the store. Suggest some names, something silly...Pancake Pops, Lighty Bities, Billy's Sillies, Jaw Breakers and False Teeth Crunch, Oochi Waa Waa Wafers...Let the children suggest names.

As the activity develops you could point out aspects of the package itself; the list of ingredients, free offers, coupons, mail-order items, visual techniques; the use of bright colors, cartoon characters, smiling faces, tasty fruits. Tape the finished sheets to the real boxes. Other packages can be fun too; cans—washed out and sharp edges pinched in with pliers, shampoo bottles, candy wrappers. All of these items can be part of a play store. (Look in the pullout section for more on cereal box design.)

Car Trips

There are things that mix better than children and car trips. Here are some suggestions to keep peace in the nickle seats.

Have long strips of manila paper, felt pens and light plywood drawing boards in the back seat for children to make bumper stickers. Advertise the home town, vacation spots, favorite foods, members of the family. Use tape to attach them to the bumper.

When "I Spy", "20 Questions", and "Geography" become old hat, devise new twists. "Spy" types of advertising, logos on buildings, products, bumper stickers, billboards, bus ads...

The clues for products chosen for "20 Questions" could deal with marketing techniques and information about the product. Such ques-

PULL-OUT SECTION

The activities in this pull-out section have been designed to help 8 - 12 year old children learn about advertising and shopping. Here are some guidelines for using the activities.

Tasty Garbles: Young children will enjoy making this cereal box for their play store. The instructions, along with some suggestions for other things to do, are written on the back of the cereal box design page. A brief lesson on reading cereal box labels is also included. Any child who can read will benefit from this lesson. Let your children practice reading labels on real boxes too.

The "Good Snacks" Crossword Puzzle: This puzzle is for young children. If your children are too young to complete the puzzle themselves, have them identify each drawing. Print the appropriate word in the puzzle box yourself.

Ad-Puzzle: Older children will enjoy this puzzle. You might even like to try it yourself.

Mr. T. Ricky Vishon Meets the Kool-Kat-Kid: In this story Mr. T. Ricky Vishon reveals how he makes TV commercials so convincing. Read it with your children, then try to find examples of the techniques Mr. T. Ricky Vishon uses in the real TV commercials you watch together.

Send For Yours Today: Any child who is interested in ordering something by mail will enjoy this exercise. Look at the sample advertisement together and try to answer the question "Would you buy this kite?" Compare the sample ad to real ads in comic books and magazines. If your child decides to order an item, suggest that he or she complete the "Record of Order" chart.

TV Commercial Bingo: The Bingo cards are on the back fold-out flap of this booklet. The instructions are printed on the cards. Your children will be able to play this game only after they can easily identify the common audio-visual techniques used in TV commercials.

SWEETOES

Tasty Garbles

FREE INSIDE!

First World War Bi-Plane

MAKING A CEREAL BOX

You can make a funny cereal box with the picture on the other side of this page. Here is how:

1. connect the dots.
2. colour the page.
3. glue or tape the page onto a real cereal box.

MORE THINGS TO DO

1. Use the cereal box in your play store.
2. Make up a TV commercial for Tasty Garbles cereal.
3. Make more cereal boxes:

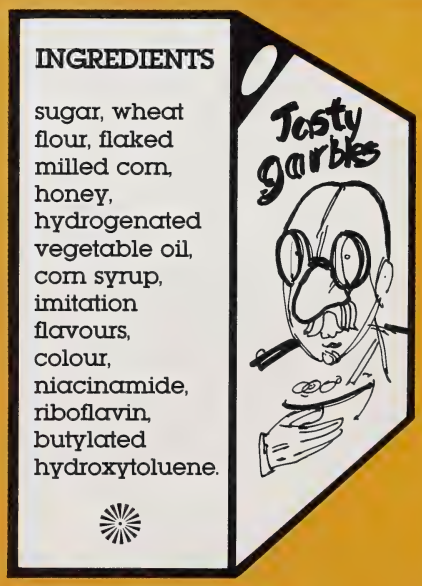
- First think of a crazy name. Here are some suggestions: Billy's Sillies, Jawbreakers and False Teeth Crunch, Lighty Bities...
- Print the name on a blank piece of paper.
- Draw and colour a picture on the paper.
- Make the picture look so good that kids would want to buy the cereal.
- Use lots of bright colours.
- If you say there is a prize inside, more kids would want to buy the cereal.
- Glue or tape your picture onto a real cereal box.

READING YOUR CEREAL BOX

If you do not see the word "sugar" on the label, it does not mean the cereal has no sugar. Look for these words on the label. They are all types of sugar:

golden syrup	icing sugar
honey	sucrose
brown sugar	fructose
corn syrup	glucose
liquid sugar	dextrose

Do you see any of these words on this label? Circle them.



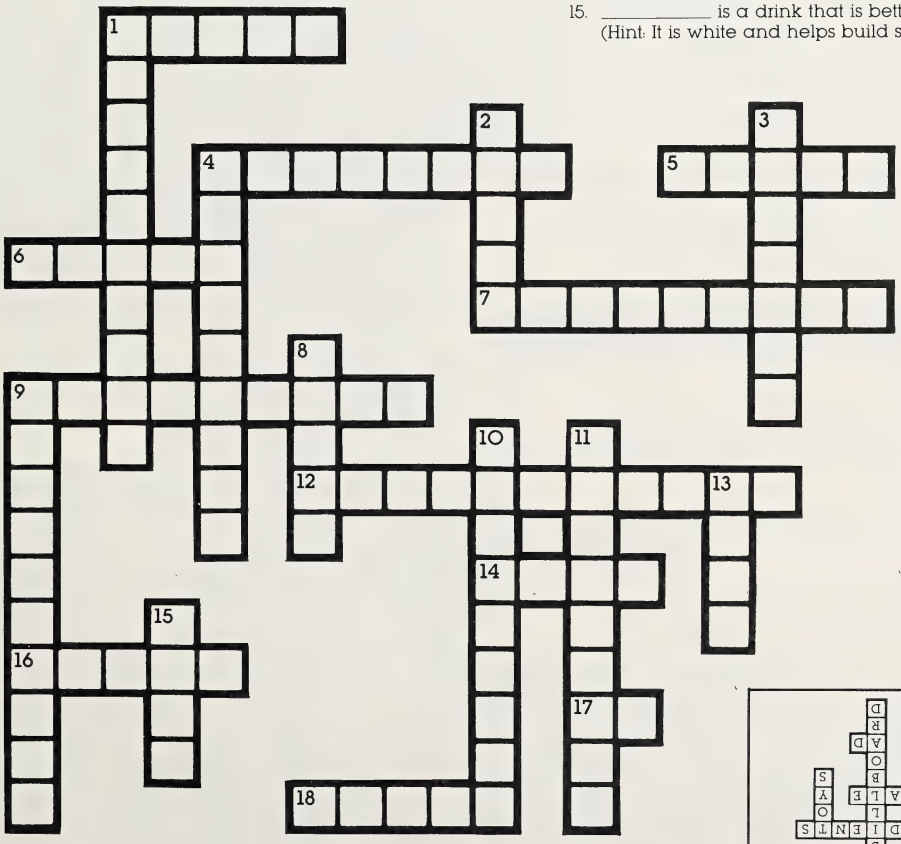
AD PUZZLE

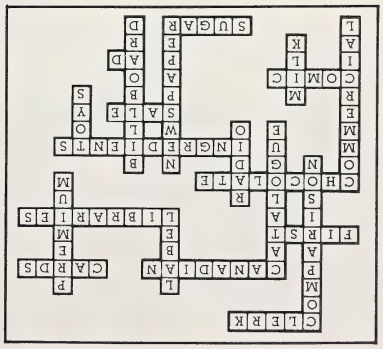
ACROSS

1. If you are in a store and want more information about a product, you can ask a store _____.
4. The "_____ Consumer" is a magazine that gives good buying information. (Hint: What are you if you were born in Canada?)
5. Advertisements in buses are called bus _____. (Hint: a deck of _____.)
6. If sugar is listed _____ on the label, it means the product has more sugar in it than anything else.
7. Copies of the "Canadian Consumer" magazine are available in public _____. (Hint: the same place you borrow books.)
9. Fruit and vegetables are better for you than _____ bars.
12. Most packaged foods have a list of _____ on the label.
14. When something is sold at a lower price than usual it is on _____.
16. _____ books contain lots of mail-order advertisements for things kids like to buy. (Hint: "Superman", "Spiderman" and "Archie" are familiar titles.)
17. The short form for advertisement is _____.
18. Eating foods that have too much _____ can cause cavities.

DOWN

1. Before buying something you should always _____ shop.
2. Most items of clothing have a _____ that tells what the item is made of and how to care for it.
3. A plastic toy packed in a cereal box is called a _____.
4. A _____ is a book that has pictures and information about products for sale.
8. You can hear advertisements on the _____, but you cannot see them.
9. An advertisement shown on television is called a _____.
10. You can read the daily news and lots of advertisements too in a _____.
11. A _____ is a large structure which carries outdoor advertising.
13. There are lots of TV commercials for _____ just before Christmas.
15. _____ is a drink that is better for you than pop. (Hint: It is white and helps build strong bones.)





Children's television advertising is regulated by the "Canadian Broadcast Code for Advertising to Children." Advertisers follow this code but some may try to trick you into buying their products. You can never tell when you will see one of Mr. T. Ricky Vishon's ads, so be on the lookout!

MR. T. Ricky & The KOOL KA

Say kid, I've got a million ways to spend your money, and there's not do about it unless you read this pa the page quickly. That's right, just t page. Do not read the rest of this. I' warning you. Aargghh. The kid's re I'm doomed...

Ever see a carrot or piece of celery advertised on TV as something fun to eat? Ask yourself why not. Candy and hamburgers are supposed to be fun to eat, but are they? Making my products look like fun is one way I get you to buy them.

Food is supposed to taste SOOOOO good and YUMMY when it's advertised on TV. But don't you believe it. I pay my actors good money to pretend that things taste DELICIOUS when they just taste, you know, OK. If you believe everything my actors tell you, I've really got a sucker on the line.

I'm out to get your money
All your dollars every one
Fill your mind with fancy talking
And with sugar-coated fun.

But don't be such a sucker
There are ways to skin this cat
Learn all about my tricks
Send me packing with my hat.

Toys look shinier and sound louder than they are in reality because I add extra sounds and flashy touches to the commercials.

Lighting: I use special lighting effects to make things look more scary or pretty or exciting than they really are. Hee Hee.

Toys and foods look bigger and tastier when I take their picture from up close.

Setting: When I put a toy boat on a mighty river and add sounds of running water, it seems like a lot more fun than showing the same toy boat in your bathtub at home, right? I try to convince you to fall for the exciting setting rather than the toy itself.

Fast-cuts: My commercials have lots of neat pictures jammed together really fast, one right after the other, to make you think something exciting's going on when it really isn't.

Vishon MEETS

T KID!

ke you
g you can
So turn
the

ing it!

I make my TV commercials with songs, jingles and music to get your attention. Music makes brand names hard to forget. One part of you forgets the name, when you hear the music, I press a little button in your head and everything comes back again. Boy, have I got you hooked.

I know that sound effects like loud noises and exciting background sounds make my commercials more convincing. That's why I make sure they're always a part of my productions.

My commercials have lots of "word" tricks, too. To really get your attention, I exaggerate a few things. And sometimes I only tell you half the truth. And then other times I say things to make you draw the wrong conclusions. Have you heard any of these tricks before?

"...this toothpaste helps prevent cavities..." —"helps" is the word to watch here. Cutting down on sugar "helps" too. Boy did I get you.

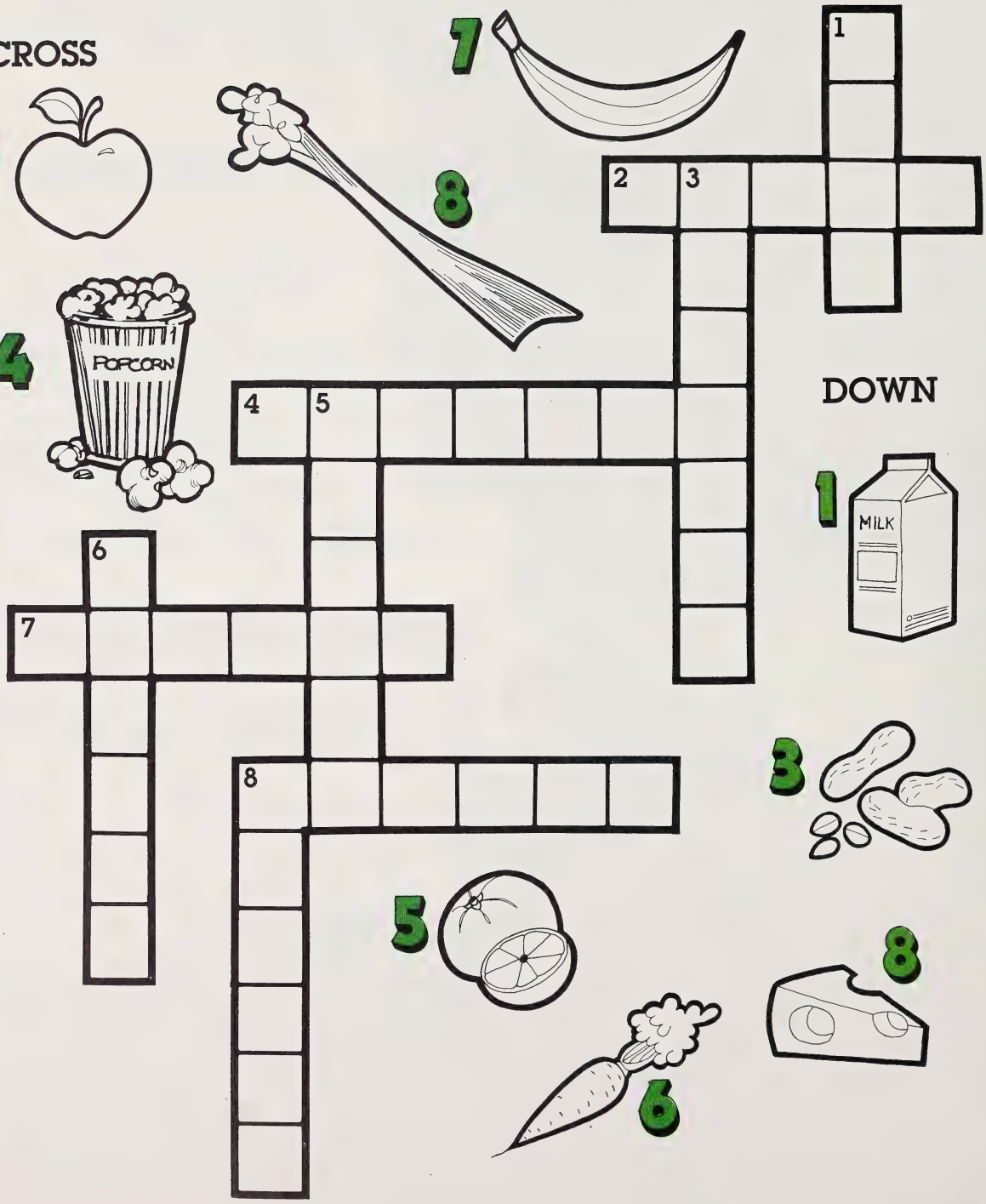
"...with the taste of real strawberries..." —This doesn't necessarily mean you're getting real strawberries. Just the taste. You thought it was a real strawberry, ha.

"...this candy bar tastes GREAT..." —Well, so do carrots and peanut butter sandwiches. It's all a matter of taste. Yours. But who remembers that when you're watching the boob tube?

MR.
T. Ricky
Vishon

"GOOD SNACKS"

CROSSWORD PUZZLE



SEND FOR YOURS TODAY

HINTS FOR BUYING BY MAIL

Before you buy something by mail, be sure you know the following information:

- the total cost.
- the size.
- the material of which it is made.
- how long it will last.

Before you order the item, look around in local stores. If you can buy the item in your own town, you will not have to wait for it.

Tell your friends about the item you want to order. Maybe one of them has one. If so, ask him what he thinks of it. Ask him to show it to you.

Keep a record of your order. You can use the chart below.

RECORD OF ORDER

What are you sending for? _____

How much does it cost? _____

What is the number of the cheque or money order you are sending? _____

On what date did you mail your order? _____

What is the name and address of the company? _____

_____

Where did you see the advertisement? _____

Tape or glue a copy of the advertisement in the space below.

Would You Send For This Kite?

Read the ad for the Spy On High kite, then answer the questions below. The correct answers are at the bottom of the page.

1. Some information that you need to make a good buying decision is missing from this ad. What is it?
2. Does the kite come ready to fly?
3. What is the total cost of the kite?
4. What "word tricks" are there in this ad?

ANSWERS:

1. The ad does not say how big the kite is. It does not say of what material the kite is made. It does not give the name of the company that is selling the kite.
2. No. Kite string is not included, and you have to put the kite together. The drawing might fool you because it shows the kite put together. It also shows kite string attached to the kite.
3. $3.47
4. The drawing of the kite might make you think that you can really spy on your friends. The words "You can spy on your friends" might also make you think this. Even though the word "pretend" is in smaller type, it is the most important word in the sentence. You cannot really spy on your friends. You can only PRETEND.

   The words "Now only $1.98" might be another trick. These words might make you think that you are getting a bargain. To know if this is really a bargain price, you would have to shop and compare. Remember too that the total price is $3.47 not $1.98.

Just Playing Around

JUST PLAYING AROUND –continued from page 8.

tions as: Is the product used by men? women? children? Does it cost less than one dollar? Is it made in Canada? Is the product advertised on radio? TV? or in the paper?

In "Geography" each person playing mentions the name of a country, city, river, continent, etc. and the next person gives another geographical name which begins with the last letter of the previous word. This can just as easily be done with commercial products.

Advertisement Scavenger Hunt

This makes a great rainy day or party activity. You will need a pile of old magazines, comic books, catalogues and newspapers. Make a list of advertisements the children must find and cut out. The list might include, for example, one advertisement for a car, one with a picture of a child, three that use the word "best" and two for cakes and cookies. The older the children the more complicated can be the list.

Look through the publications ahead of time to be sure they will be able to find the items on the list.

They will have more fun working in teams. The first team finished wins.

For a related activity, have the kids use the advertisements to make collages.

As they hunt through the publications, point out aspects of the advertisements they choose; the pretty girls draped over cars, the smiling faces, the frequent use of words like "best", "fastest", "tastiest".

Make Up Ads

For special occasions; birthdays, father's day, mother's day, graduations, first day at school, first ballet class, first ball game, help your children make up an advertisement for the special person. It could be done on paper, instead of a card, or make up a jingle telling about the occasion and what a great guy the special person is. As the children become older and more practiced, their ads will become more sophisticated. They will devise short skits and plays. This will add fun and laughter to special occasions. You might want to take photographs, or make movies, videotapes or audio tapes of these performances.

A large cardboard box with a hole the shape of a TV screen makes a simple TV theatre. Make the hole large enough to accommodate a child or two plus hand puppets, sock puppets and paper bag puppets. Poster paint can be used to decorate the box with dials, switches and antenna. Encourage the children to make up stories and commercials as well.

Special effects can add to the excitement of the performance. A flashlight becomes a spot light. Tinsel and sparkles add glitter. Back drops can be painted and attached to the inside of the TV.

Advertisements for the family cat or little brother might be fun, or perhaps up-coming events; the circus, the swimming pool or products; mother's popcorn or dad's pancakes.

Drama and Role Playing

A collection of empty cans, cartons and containers may be organized into a play store. Use the packages that the children have designed. Pin up advertisements from magazines or newspapers to add color and authenticity. A toy cash register or money box can add interest to the play centre. Marketing techniques can be used; today's special signs, check-out counter displays.

You may wish to run a confectionary from your refrigerator with nutrition-rich snacks, fruit juice or yogurt popsicles, frozen bananas, fruit and nut mixtures.

As children begin to make selections and purchases, it is helpful for them to work through the situation beforehand, perhaps in the car on the way to the store. You take the role of the salesperson and the child is the buyer. Go through the social conventions: waiting turn, greetings. Ask for a description of what is wanted and how much money is to be spent. Go into how to determine the quality of the particular item to be chosen. Once the children understand what is expected of them and what they can expect from the salespeople, they will feel more comfortable and confident in the situation.

After the purchase has been made, role playing can be used again to sort out any problems or points of confusion.

Art Activities

Make a deck of fortune telling cards with your children, using magazine photographs, parts of advertising scripts and slogans pasted on recipe size index cards. The cards might focus on themes like travel, romance, money, cars, food, as well as more outrageous ideas that the ads will suggest. Tell fortunes using the cards to indicate such things as the past, the future, love life, career, goals, successes and failures. The children will enjoy adding to the collection of cards and telling their friends' fortunes.

Cutting out pictures, slogans and parts of ads and pasting them on heavy paper to make collages can be fun for children. It is a good opportunity to talk about the appeals used in advertising. Look at roles and concerns of men and women in advertising. Do all women worry about having a shining kitchen? Is the greatest concern of men having a sexy car? In your house things may be different, and that may be the way you want it.

Shopping Adventures

Enthusiastic parents share their ideas for teaching children how to buy wisely.

Advertising does not teach children how to buy wisely, but parents can do the job. At least that was the conclusion of parents who attended a series of "children and advertising" workshops conducted by Alberta Consumer and Corporate Affairs.

Common Themes

The parents felt they could teach their children by direct instruction, that is, by showing them and talking to them about how to buy products based on solid facts rather than on advertising hype.

Experience is a great teacher, thought parents. Let the children do some of the shopping. They can begin by choosing simple things with a parent's guidance. Gradually, they can work up to buying more complicated items by themselves.

The parents felt they must set a good example. One father said, "Since we started teaching our children how to shop, I get the feeling that they are always watching me." It is true. Children will watch and listen as their parents ask about the

guarantee on a toaster, or check the label in a shirt.

Here are some stories the parents told, along with some of their ideas for using shopping to teach children how to buy wisely.

At the Grocery Store

Parents all over the province let their children choose the family breakfast cereal. This is a great idea as long as the children are old enough to read the labels and to follow buying guidelines. Some parents ask their children to choose cereals which have a low sugar content. Others ask that they choose cereals which do not have a premium packed in the box, or which are not over a certain price. Make your own guidelines but discuss why they are important with your children.

Children will enjoy choosing other foods too. Try peanut butter, cheese, fruit, or any product that they enjoy eating. Just explain the buying rules and let them go to it.

If your children are too young to choose products, make the choices yourself, but tell them why you are buying. Similarly, tell them why you do not buy certain items. Such discussions lay a solid groundwork for later lessons.

Finally, point out marketing techniques such as, end-of-aisle displays and "special" offers. Talk to your children about how these techniques influence consumers to buy. Many parents encourage their children to use these marketing techniques in a play store at home. Their children have fun dreaming up creative strategies.

Send For Yours Today

Once children learn to read, they can learn to deal with the tempting mail-order offers in comic books and magazines. Here is one father's approach to a lesson in mail-order buying.

"Last April, my 10 year old son saw a comic book ad for a kite shaped like a space ship. I told him that he could buy one here in town, but no, he had to have **that** kite! The ad looked kind of suspicious to me. I told him why I thought so, but I let him send for the kite anyway.

Well, two weeks went by, and no kite. One month went by, and still no kite. At the end of June, his kite finally came. You should have seen his face when he opened the package. I don't know what he expected but it sure wasn't what he got. To make matters worse, there was no kite string included in the package. He had to wait for his next week's allowance before he could even fly the thing. He was upset, but I know he learned a lot from the experience."

This dad went on to tell how he and his son looked at the mail-order ad again. He pointed out the exaggerated statements and the flashy illustrations, and they talked about how to shop by mail. His son is now a real whiz at spotting the ploys in shady mail-order ads. He can also tell when an ad is an honest offer and a good deal.

The "Send for Yours Today" exercise in the pull-out section grew out of discussions like this one. Do this exercise with your children the next time they want to buy something they have seen in a comic book or magazine.

FINDING FACTS THE ADS DON'T REVEAL

Teach your children how to use sources of unbiased information. Children learn by example. If you are shopping for an unfamiliar item, check it out before buying.

Canadian Consumer: This monthly magazine evaluates two or three products per issue. In October of each year there is a special report on toys. This magazine is available in most public and many school libraries. Subscriptions may be purchased from: Circulation Department, Consumers' Association of Canada, 2660 Southvale Crescent, Level 3, Ottawa, Ontario, K1B 5C4.

Consumer Reports: This monthly magazine is published in the United States. It evaluates five or six products per issue. It is available in most public and many school libraries. Subscriptions may be purchased from: Subscription Director, Consumer Reports, Box 53009, Boulder, Colorado, 80322-3009.

Penny Power: This American magazine is published six times during each school year. Cartoons, pull-out posters and lively stories give children, aged 8-12, information on the products they buy and use. Check public and school libraries. Subscriptions may be purchased from: Penny Power, Box 54841, Boulder, Colorado, 80322-4841.

Alberta Consumer and Corporate Affairs Tip Sheets: These free tip sheets contain general buying information. Some examples are "Shop Around", "Buying Toys", and "Mail Order Buying". Use the coupon on page 16 to order copies.

Newspapers and Specialty Magazines: Daily newspapers are full of consumer information, music and record review columns, sports and hobby columns, children's sections. Point these out to your children. Magazines that focus on special interest areas such as stereo equipment or jogging also offer product reports.

Friends: Adults obtain much product information from friends who already own a similar item. Encourage your children to do the same. They could even do mini-surveys before buying an item.

Other Marketplace Lessons

Children will be interested in learning how to buy gifts and items they use themselves. Toys, batteries, bicycles, bicycle accessories, records, tapes, clothing, and hobby equipment are all suggestions given by parents.

Here is one family's experience with gift-buying. It is a good example of how to ease a child into making complex buying decisions.

"A few years ago at Christmas, I started comparing prices and checking test reports on toys. At first I did all the checking and just told my daughter what I was doing. Gradually she started helping me. Now she's really got the hang of it. Last Christmas it was her job to make a list of good toys for her brother and sister. By the time the Christmas toy commercials came on, she could tell us the price and the good and bad points about almost every toy advertised. Did we ever have some good discussions about those toy commercials. It sure opened her eyes.

This year we promised her a bike for her birthday. All by herself, she decided to check out the various brand names in the consumer magazines. She's only eleven years old, but she really knows what she's doing."

This young girl transfered the things she learned while making the toy list to another buying situation. This is what parents should aim for.

There are two other interesting things about this story. First, learning the right way to make buying decisions helped the girl look at TV commercials more critically. Second, the same three themes that were listed at the beginning of this article are present in this story. The parent provided the child with a good example, with direct instruction and with buying experience.

As you search the marketplace for learning opportunities, keep these three themes in mind. Here are some additional ideas to guide you. Children are anxious to learn, but it takes a while for the lessons to pay off. Be patient. Go slowly. Be natural, every shopping trip need not be a guided lecture tour. Choose a time and place that suits your busy schedule. Make the lessons brief and repeat them often.

Speak Out

Help keep children's advertising fair.

Manufacturers do not wish to alienate customers by advertising their products in a way that offends people. Stores do not wish to lose customers because of their marketing techniques. TV stations depend on their audiences to sell commercial time. If they lose audiences by running certain advertisements, they want to know. Let your voice be heard. You will be surprised at how powerful it can be.

In addition to contacting manufacturers, retailers and broadcasters, write to The Advertising Standards Council. This Council operates the "Broadcast Code for Advertising to Children." All children's advertising on Canadian radio and TV stations must comply with the "Code". Write to the Council for a copy of the "Code" or to complain about advertising. The address is: Children's Advertising Section, Advertising Standards Council, Suite 402, 350 Bloor Street East, Toronto, Ontario M4W 1H5.

If you think that an advertisement has gone beyond merely convincing the public to downright misleading them, contact Alberta Consumer & Corporate Affairs. It administers the **Unfair Trade Practices Act** which regulates misleading advertising in Alberta. Regional office addresses are provided on page 16.

People learn a lot from compliments too. When you see something you like, speak out. Ask for more of the same.

Parents should speak out about children's television programming as well as about advertising. Contact the Children's Broadcast Institute and Action For Children's Television.

Since 1974 The Children's Broadcast Institute has been promoting more and better TV programs for Canadian children. Write to them about their activities and materials at: Children's Broadcast Institute, Suite 405, 234 Eglinton Avenue East, Toronto, Ontario M4P 1K5.

Action for Children's Television is an American organization founded in 1968. It is trying to encourage diversity and eliminate commercial abuses in children's television in the United States. Write to this address for a list of materials: Action For Children's Television, 46 Austin Street, NEWTONVILLE, Massachusetts 02160.

Finally, take advantage of the fact that children influence each other. Talk to your friends, family and neighbours about children's advertising and children's television. If other parents teach their children how to critically analyze advertising and TV programming, there will be less pressure on your children and you.

Saying Yes: Saying No

Embattled parents, take heart! Here are some guidelines to help you say yes and no to your children when they ask for things, teach some consumer lessons and keep the lines of communication open.

Six year old Kyle lags behind his Mom, attracted by the display racks near the check-out counter. As Linda pays the cashier, she feels her son's hand on her arm. Looking down she sees some candy in his hand and that familiar look in his eye. "No", shouts Linda. "Screeeech——", retorts Kyle. The cashier frowns, the other customers shift impatiently. Kyle continues his tantrum until Linda gives in. "How much is it?", she asks. Satisfied, Kyle, rips the wrapping off the candy and happily leads the way out to the parking lot. He's won another round.

Like Kyle, most children are tempted by advertised products, whether candy bars or space toys. It is natural that they will ask for these items.

The way in which parents handle such requests will teach their children a lot about being consumers. For example, Kyle has just learned that if he offers a few well-timed screams, his Mom will buy him what he wants. He has also learned that candy is an appropriate snack. Undoubtedly, these are not lessons Linda had intended to teach.

You Are The Best Judge

Parents act in their own best interests, as well as their, children's, when they say no to requests for items of which they do not approve. They will not have to continually battle against the pressure of their children's requests if they make their position clear from the beginning. They will be able to act with the confidence of knowing that they are choosing what is best for their children's health, safety and development.

Say More Than Yes or No

Talking about requests together, instead of flatly refusing, will help your child deal with disappointment. Give short and clear reasons why you will not buy the item and remain calm and friendly. This is much easier when you have thought through your strategy beforehand and talk openly with your children.

Parents can help their children to understand the adult world by explaining why they agree to certain requests. It can be as simple as this example. "When you asked me to buy the Dumbo The Elephant record and book, I thought of how much you listen to your Lone Ranger record and follow in the book. You are also good at working the record player and know how not to play it too loud. I thought you would probably like this one. I think you have made a good choice."

Establish Family Buying Guidelines

Children who understand the basis of family buying decisions will eventually learn to make requests more in keeping with family values and standards. To this end, you and your children could develop family buying guidelines. Relate the guidelines to your family's wants and needs. Tailor them to each child's level of understanding. Discuss them **before** a child asks for something, not during a tantrum in the grocery store. Apply them consistently.

Here are some guidelines followed by several Alberta families:

- One family has agreed that they will never buy things like chocolate bars and pop when they are grocery shopping. The children no longer ask for these items.
- Another family has decided that if the older children ask for a toy, they will also give the parents information such as, how much it costs and of what materials it is made. Further they will explain why they want the toy. The parents have found that this helps them make better decisions and has decreased the number of impulsive requests made by the children.
- In yet another household, nutritious snacks, such as fruit juice, cheese, peanuts, and raw vegetable sticks are provided in abundant quantity. If the children want snacks such as chocolate bars and pop, they buy them with their own allowances.

Suggest Alternatives and Be Prepared to Negotiate

If you must say no to a purchase request, suggest alternatives which are more in keeping with your standards.

Johnny: Dad, I want this chocolate bar.

Dad: You can have a piece of red licorice or a piece of black licorice. Which do you want?

Johnny: I want the chocolate bar.

Dad: That's not a choice. Either red or black licorice...or nothing. Which do you want?

You will be surprized how fast the child will cut his losses and go with the licorice. The idea is to keep control of the situation rather than give in to the child.

Explain why the alternatives you suggest are better. Encourage the child to suggest alternatives too.

Sometimes you simply cannot afford to say yes, even though you want to. There are always alternatives. Suppose, for example, that your child has asked for a 10-speed bicycle but you simply cannot afford it. Could you organize some appealing activities for your child and his friends that do not require a bicycle? Could you rent or borrow a bicycle for special occasions? Would a second-hand, standard model be okay? If the child is old enough, could you help him make plans for earning the money needed himself?

Do not feel bad about saying no because you cannot afford a certain item. For the rest of their lives, your children will have to live within a set income. It is never too early to learn this lesson.

Set a Good Example

Your example is more powerful than your words. Parents who are obviously under the spell of advertisers, impulsively buying what they want when they want it, will find it more difficult to deal with their children's demands.

Go Easy on Yourself

Dealing with your children's purchase requests in a rational and calm manner is not always an easy task. There may be times when you find yourself shouting a terse "NO". There may be times when your child will not accept your refusal to buy an item, no matter how diplomatically you have phrased it, and proceeds to demonstrate his own vocal talents. Go easy on yourself at times like these. A few encounters that do not end precisely as you want them to, do not make you a failure as a parent. Keep at it! Your continuing efforts will make a difference in the long run.

HELPING YOU HELP YOURSELF

Send for more consumer information. Please check the items you require.

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TIP SHEETS

- ☐ Advertising Techniques and Guidelines
- ☐ Buying Toys
- ☐ Children's Allowances
- ☐ Common Marketplace Misconceptions
- ☐ Guarantees and Warranties
- ☐ Mail Order Buying
- ☐ Shop Around

BOOKLETS

- ☐ Mom Buy Me That
- ☐ Moving Out (a guide to independent living for young adults 16-20 years old)
- ☐ Taking Charge of Your Money (a guide to basic money and credit management)

Name _____

Address _____

City/Town _____ Postal Code _____

Mail coupon to: Alberta Consumer and Corporate Affairs, Box 1616, Edmonton, Alberta, T5J 2N9, or contact any regional office.

Calgary 297-5700
301 Centre 70
7015 Macleod Trail South
Box 5880, Postal Station A
Calgary, Alberta
T2H 2M9

Edmonton 427-5782
3rd Floor Capilano Centre
9945 - 50 Street
Edmonton, Alberta
T6A 0L4

Fort McMurray 743-7231
Provincial Building
5th Floor West Tower
9915 Franklin Avenue
Fort McMurray, Alberta
T9H 2K4

Grande Prairie 538-5400
Provincial Building
10320 - 99 Street
Box 7
Grande Prairie, Alberta
T8V 6J4

Lethbridge 381-5360
300 Professional Building
740 - 4 Avenue South
Bag Service 3014
Lethbridge, Alberta
T1J 4C7

Medicine Hat 529-3535
303 Provincial Building
770 - 6 Street S.W.
Medicine Hat, Alberta
T1A 4J6

Peace River 624-6214
Provincial Building
9621 - 96 Avenue
Bag 900, Box 9
Peace River, Alberta
T0H 2X0

Red Deer 340-5241
2nd Floor Provincial Building
4920 - 51 Street
Red Deer, Alberta
T4N 6K8

TV. Commercial Bingo!

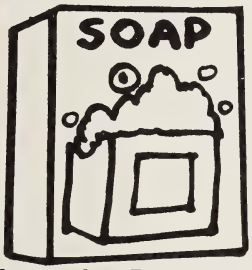
INSTRUCTIONS: This game can be played alone or with a friend. It is played while you are watching TV commercials. Use buttons, pennies, or dried beans for tokens. When you see what is in a square on the TV screen, place a token in that square. When you fill enough spaces to make a straight line—up, down, across, or diagonal—you win!

Smiling Person

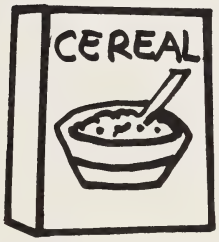
Toys

Close-Up Shot

Candy



Laundry Detergent



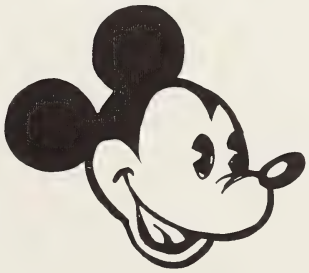
Breakfast Cereal

Pop

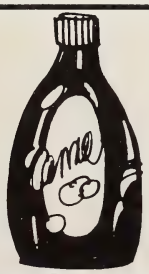
79¢
Price

Female Announcer

Laughter


Cartoon Character

Sound Effects


Hair Shampoo

Male Announcer

Music

Toothpaste

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301 Centre 70
7015 Macleod Trail South
Box 5880 Postal Station A
Calgary, Alberta
T2H 2M9

Edmonton 427-5782
3rd Floor Capilano Centre
9945 - 50 Street
Edmonton, Alberta
T6A 0L4

Fort McMurray 743-7231
Provincial Building
5th Floor West Tower
9915 Franklin Avenue
Fort McMurray, Alberta
T9H 2K4

Grande Prairie 538-5400
Provincial Building
10320 - 99 Street
Box 7
Grande Prairie, Alberta
T8V 6J4

Lethbridge 381-5360
300 Professional Building
740 - 4 Avenue South
Bag Service 3014
Lethbridge, Alberta
T1J 4C7

Medicine Hat 529-3535
303 Provincial Building
770 - 6 Street S.W.
Medicine Hat, Alberta
T1A 4J6

Peace River 624-6214
Provincial Building
9621 - 96 Avenue
Bag 900, Box 9
Peace River, Alberta
T0H 2X0

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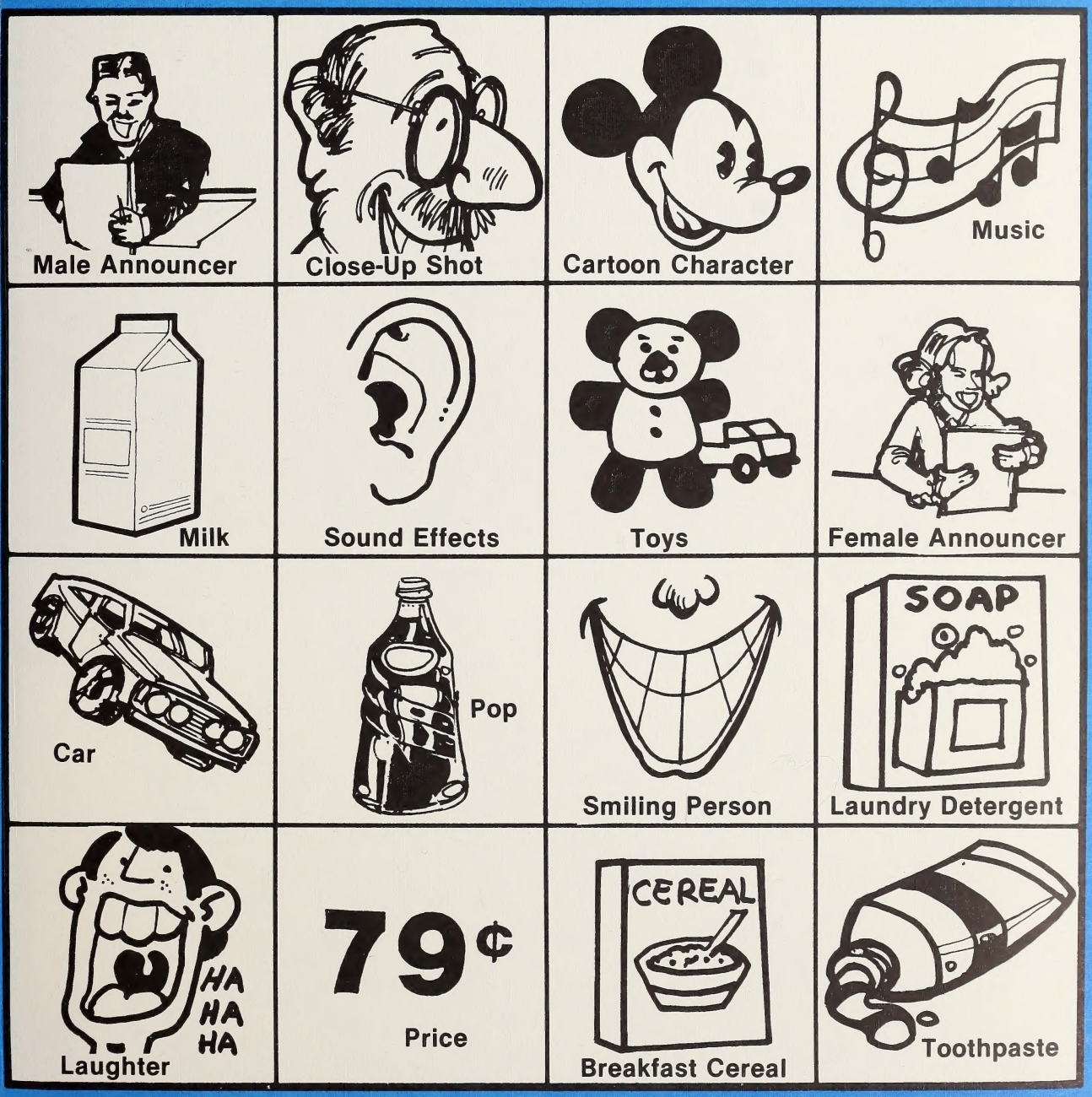

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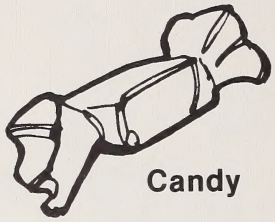
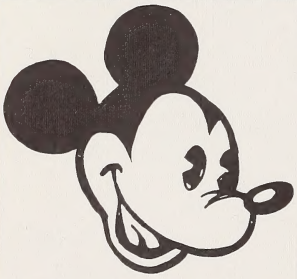
Fruit Juice

Music



Candy

Laundry Detergent



Cartoon Character

Toys

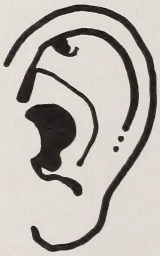
Female Announcer

Laughter

Close-Up Shot

Male Announcer

Pop



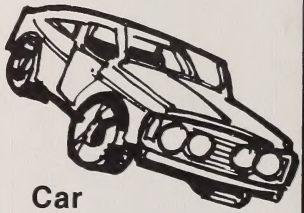
Sound Effects

Hair Shampoo

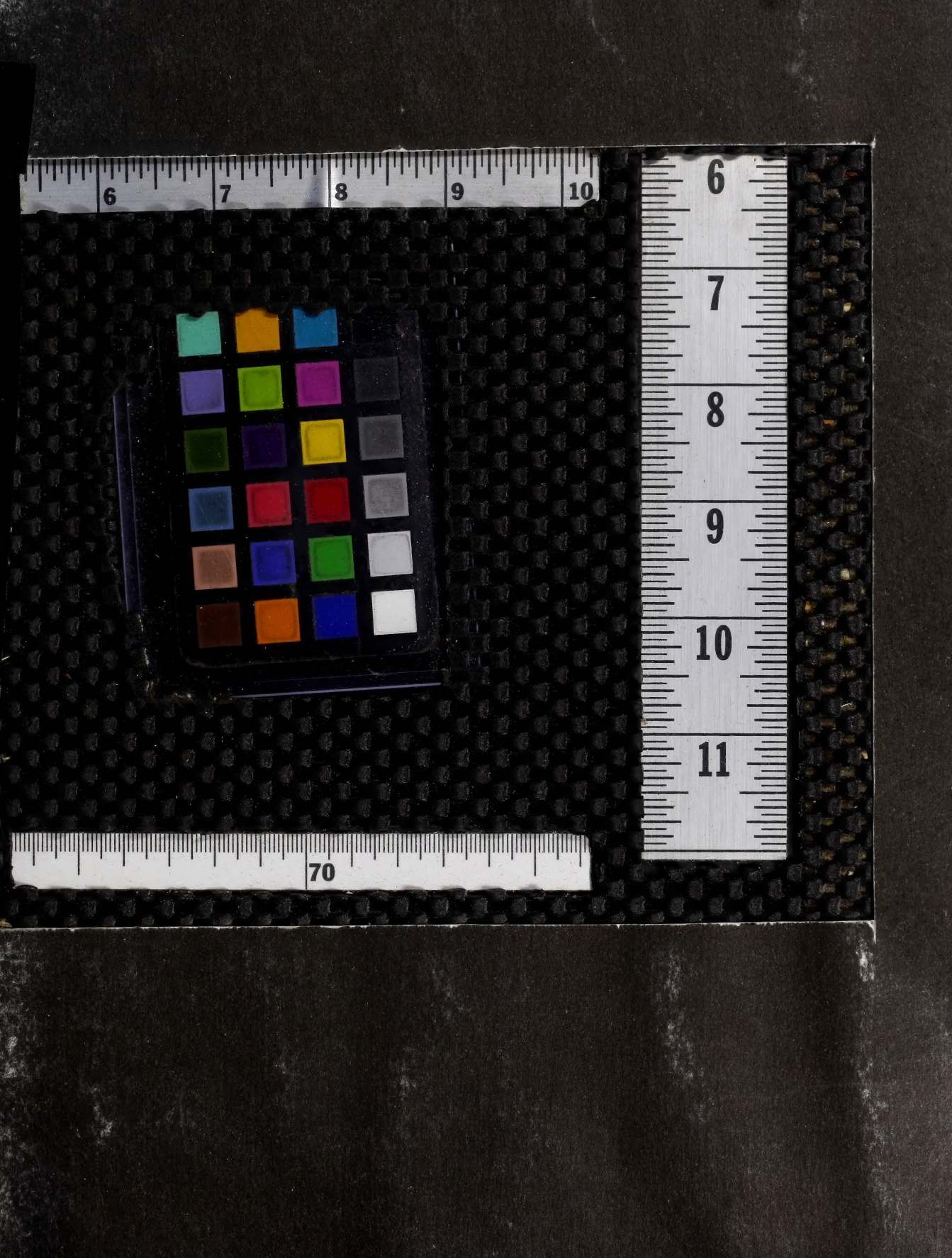
Smiling Person

79¢

Price



Car


6
7
8
9
10
70
6
7
8
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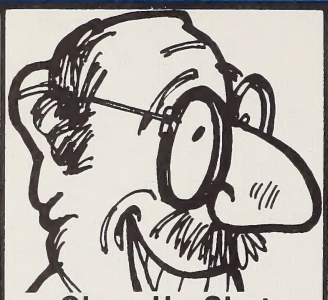
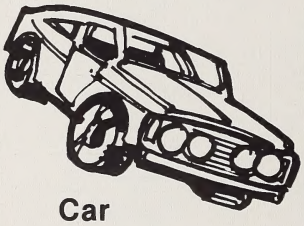
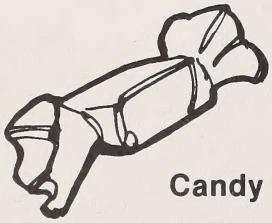
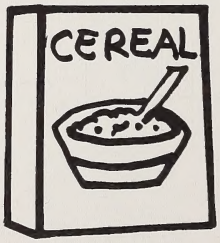
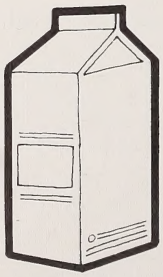
10
11

TV. Commercial Bingo!

N.L.C. - B.N.C.
3 3286 08536362 6

INSTRUCTIONS: This game can be played alone or with a friend. It is played while you are watching TV commercials. Use buttons, pennies, or dried beans for tokens. When you see what is in a square on the TV screen, place a token in that square. When you fill enough spaces to make a straight line—up, down, across, or diagonal—you win!

Smiling Person	 Close-Up Shot	Female Announcer	Pop
Sound Effects	Music	 Car	Hair Shampoo
 Candy	Toothpaste	 Breakfast Cereal	Fruit Juice
Laughter	 Milk	79¢ Price	Male Announcer